

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

200646Z May 05

ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DS-00
	OIGO-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	NSAE-00	OIC-00	PA-00	GIWI-00
	IRM-00	FMP-00	BBG-00	IIP-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/001W		

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7698
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

UNCLAS HANOI 001184

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV AND PRM, BANGKOK FOR REFUGEE
COORDINATOR, GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNHCR VISITS CENTRAL HIGHLANDS RETURNEES

Reftels: Hanoi 991 and previous

1. (SBU) Summary: UNHCR Officer-in-Charge for Vietnam Vu Anh Son has begun a visit to ethnic minority returnees in the Central Highlands province of Gia Lai. He reported to Poloff that he has been able to travel freely and met with many of the 35 individuals voluntarily returned from Cambodia. Allegations made by Human Rights Watch (HRW) of mistreatment of returnees are "not true." All the returnees he has visited own land, and many were given rice upon their return. End Summary

2. (SBU) Son informed Poloff that he received his permission to travel through the MFA on the afternoon of May 17, and went to Pleiku on May 18. He expects to remain in the Central Highlands until May 21. When he arrived in Gia Lai, he was closely monitored by authorities, but after discussing the reason for his visit and showing that he "is not a threat," he managed to put the local officials at ease. Son reported that he has been able to travel without restriction. The local authorities' permissiveness has been "more than I expected," Son said.

3. (SBU) Son noted that, so far, he has been allowed to meet privately with "a number of returnees," including some of those specifically mentioned in Human Rights Watch's (HRW) May briefing paper. (Note: HRW alleged that at least four returnees had been interrogated and beaten by police upon their return, and that at least eight are confined to their homes. The HRW briefing paper did not give names, but specified communes and districts of the alleged victims. Son told Poloff he had been provided with the names of these alleged victims through UNHCR's office in Phnom Penh. End Note.) The accounts he received from returnees are "totally different" from HRW's allegations, and the HRW claims are "not true." While several returnees were required to "consult with authorities," they were only told that they must follow the laws of Vietnam, Son said.

4. (SBU) Son recounted that he had heard a number of "quite positive stories" from returnees. Several have been provided 20 kg of rice by authorities upon their return, and all had family plots of land measuring at least 1 ha. "They are not rich, but okay compared to some people in Central and Northwest Vietnam." Son promised a more complete brief upon his return to Hanoi.

5. (SBU) Comment: We are relieved that the GVN has finally relented and allowed a UNHCR visit to the returnees. Hopefully this will be the first step towards more systematic monitoring. However, we view Son's experience as a piece of the elephant, rather than the definitive take on the situation. Authorities in the Central Highlands are adept at showing a positive face to outsiders, and some of our own sources have suggested HRW claims of travel restriction may be true in some instances (reported Septel from Ho Chi Minh City). End Comment.

BOARDMAN

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